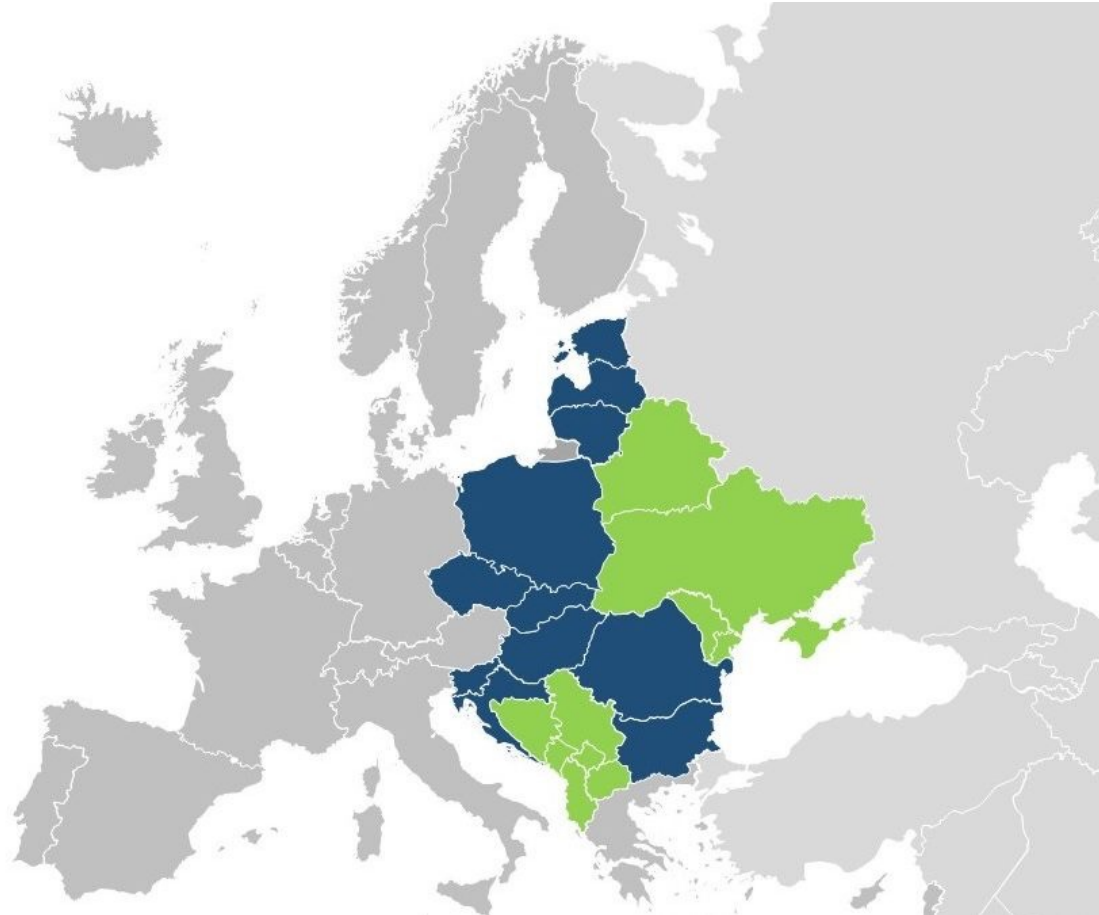


# „Wie Orbán den öffentlich- rechtlichen Rundfunk kaperte“ IMPULSE FÜR DEN ORF. Kapitel 7.

Krisztina Rozgonyi  
Presseclub Concordia  
19 April 2024

# Hungary in the Central Eastern European context - 30 years of democratic transitions



# Media capture in CEE: the key events and components

- The financial crisis of 2007-2008 increased the economic vulnerability of media companies
- The '**Exodus**': the exit of foreign investors from Central & Eastern Europe: most of the 17 most prominent media companies left since 2006 (Dragomir 2019)

# The media - several shades of censorship

„Grasping for air“

Media capture (Dragomir 2022)

- Regulatory capture
- Control of public media
- Use of state funding as a control tool
- Ownership takeover



Eric Drooker: Censorship. URL:  
<http://www.drooker.com/illustration-gallery/d8o7z808t4cjauuuk3mcbrdopuggwy>.

# Hungary: the ‘textbook-case’ of media capture

## **New media laws in Hungary in 2010 – the rapidity of change**

25 Apr 2010 - Fidesz wins the election with more than 50% of votes, - a two-thirds majority of MPs

11 June 2010 - Government MPs propose far-reaching media law reforms

23 June 2010 – International journalists’ organisations and media professionals criticise the draft media law package

24 June 2010 - OSCE demands "halt" to new media reforms

**22 July 2010 - Parliament passes overhaul of media regulation structure**

**6 Sept 2010 - European Commission: " No reason to intervene"**

15 Sept 2010 - OSCE says media package puts "chilling effect" on press

**Nov 2010 - the new ‘Media Constitution’**

**21 Dec 2010 – the new Media Act was passed**

2 Dec 2010 - Papers protest with blank front pages

13-30 Dec 2010 - Protests and criticism over new media laws with no effect

**3 Jan 2011 - "Freedom of the press in Hungary comes to an end"**

# Three pillars of an illiberal media policy (Polyák&Urbán, 2016)

Undermining the independence of organisations overseeing private and public media

structural bias and discriminatory practice of the supervisory body

extremely centralized and intransparent public media

Manipulation of access to the market resources necessary for media market activities

state advertisements, government-granted credit

frequencies, digital capacities

control of the entire value chain

Manipulation of the information environment by controlling the access to public information and the political agenda

permanent political campaigns

hampering access to public information

discrimination and humiliation of journalists

# Structural limitations – Public Service Media (Polyák 2015)

## Centralisation

Public Service Foundation  
– production,  
programming  
procurement, licensee of  
all copyrights of  
predecessor

National News Agency

## Potential political interference through PSB governance mechanisms

General director of the  
Public Service Foundation  
→ nominated by the Chair  
of the Media Council

Supervisory Bodies –  
unbalanced political  
representation

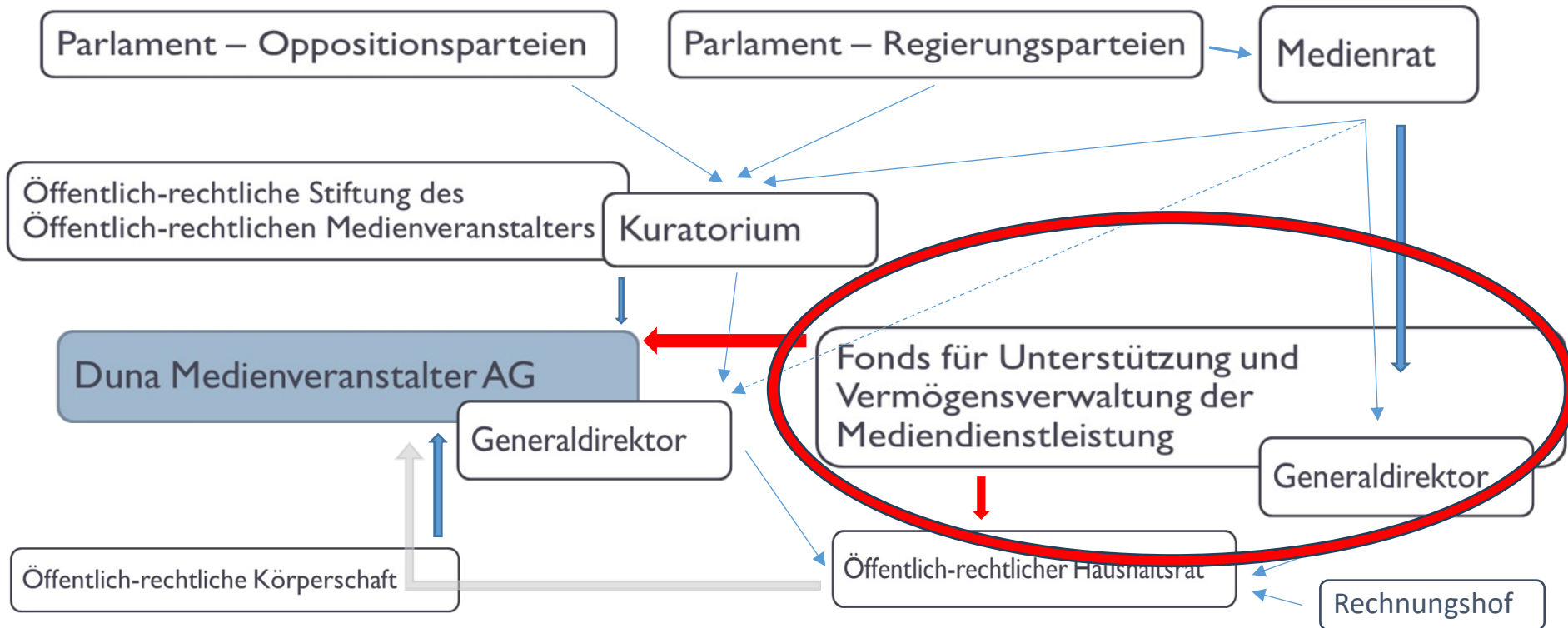
Legal incorporation as  
public body – no trade  
union of journalists'

## Financing

No public control  
mechanisms

Over-financing  
(corruption, rent  
seeking)

## **„Zentralisierte Organisation ohne klare Verantwortungen“ (Polyák 2015)**





# Non-availability of International Legal Instruments

- ECtHR Article 10 ECHR: no motion
- EU State aid rules vis-à-vis National News Agency news provision free of charge: no action
- EMFA Article 5: too late (?)

# PSM = State Propaganda

*EP elections 2020: Editorial instruction at MTVA: "This institution does not support opposition coalition" (...) "the mafia could be similar, I suppose" - such is the inside of the public media (04.03.2019)*



A Híradó tudósítása: Orbán Viktor szavazott a 2019-es Európai Parlamenti választásokon.



Bende Balázs

the public broadcaster „amplified anti-migration rhetoric (...) showed **bias in favour of the ruling coalition** and the government, which received 61 per cent of the news coverage. **Over 90 per cent of it was positive in tone**, while the coverage of the opposition was negative in tone in 82 per cent of the news” (OSCE, 2018)

# PSM = State Propaganda

*“Die Wiener sind fassungslos über die leeren Supermarktregale” (25.04.2022)*



## Döbbenten állnak a bécsiek a supermarket üres polcai előtt

Szerző: hirado.hu | 2022.04.25. 13:57 | Frissítve: 2022.04.29. 09:34

Főoldal / Külföld



# What is the relevance of the Hungarian PSM case to Austria?

## Revisiting 'Independence'

1. The notion of independence
2. The legal foundations
3. Financial independence
4. Organisational and governance
5. The context and the 'culture' of independence – the patron-client system (Bajomi-Lázár 2019)
6. The level of the individuals: independence & integrity

# What is at stake?

**Systemic vulnerabilities of the Austrian democratic media sphere**

**‘Normalisation’ of systemic attacks on independence**

*The liberal public sphere?*

## Kontakt

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